

KENTUCKY HISTORIC RESOURCES
GROUP SURVEY FORM
(KHC 91-2)

COUNTY Jefferson
GROUP # JF-033
RELATED GROUP # _____
INTENSIVE DOC. /
EVALUATION G/Eligible Group
DESTROYED /

For instructions, see the Kentucky Historic Resources Survey Manual.

1. NAME OF GROUP (how determined): Fern Creek Wesleyan Methodist Camp Meeting 1/Other: Original owner or builder	15. PREDOMINANT STYLES: <u>6/R Lodge Rustic</u> <u>6/V Early 20th Vernacular & 7/V Mid-Century Vernacular</u>
2. ADDRESS/LOCATION: 7009 South Watterson Trail, Louisville 40291	16. PREDOMINANT FUNCTIONS: <u>01/A residential, single family</u> <u>/</u>
3. UTM REFERENCE: Quad. Name: Louisville West Date: 1994 Zone: 16 Easting: 621457.575E Northing: 4222975.0657N Accuracy: NAD 83/ARCGIS	17. PREDOMINANT CONSTRUCTION METHODS/MATERIALS: <u>W/3 frame construction, type unknown</u> <u>/</u>
4. OWNER/ADDRESS (Complex Only): Pulte Homes of Ohio, 10035 Forest Glen Blvd, 40223	18. CONTRIBUTING FEATURES: <u>16/other, pedestrian paths</u> <u>16/other, mature deciduous trees</u> <u>16/other, loop roadway</u>
5. FIELD RECORDER/AFFILIATION: Rachel Kennedy & Emily Skinner/Corn Island Arch.	19. ASSOCIATED INDIVIDUAL RESOURCES. JF-2771 through JF-2798 (28 resources total)
6. DATE RECORDED: July/August 2014	20. MAP. See continuation sheet.
7. SPONSOR: Pulte Homes	21. Photos. See continuation sheet.
8. INITIATION: 5/Other Metro Louisville Preservation Office	
9. OTHER DOCUMENTATION/RECOGNITION: x <u>Survey</u> <u>HABS/HAER</u> <u>KY Land</u> <u>Local Land</u> <u>NR</u> <u>R & C</u> <u>NHL</u> Other:	
10. GROUP TYPE: <u>06/A religious site</u> <u>historic</u> <u>99/V vacant/abandoned</u> <u>current</u>	
11. APPROXIMATE SIZE: 6.16670 acres	
12. LAYOUT: /Informal	
13. DATE RANGE: <u>3/ 1938- 1968</u> <u>/</u>	
14. PREDOMINANT PLANS: <u>O/Other: Various plans depending on building type</u>	

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20. Map:

Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp (JF-033)



Figure 1. USGS Topographic Map, Jeffersontown, KY Quadrangle, 1994 (NAD 83). Drawn using ARCGIS.

Table 1. UTM Coordinates

Point	Northing	Easting
1	4223021.0429	621513.3742
2	4222785.0341	621457.2825
3	4222861.2342	621315.4655
4	4223026.3345	621323.9322

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Figure 2. JF-033 Site Plan/Field Site Survey Map

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21. Context Photos (representative examples):



JF033_1: Entry into Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp from South Watterson Trail, looking east.



JF033_2: View of South Watterson from camp entry, looking north

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JF033_3: Photo taken from gravel entry road toward the Fern Creek Wesleyan Tabernacle building (#1), looking NE.



JF033_4: Photo taken from entryway toward buildings 2, 3, 5, and 7 on site plan, looking SE.

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JF033_5: Open field located behind buildings 6 and 7 on site plan, looking east.



JF033_6: Cabin Cluster 1 (buildings 18 and 19 on site plan), looking NE.

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JF033_7: Cabin cluster 1 viewing buildings 12-14 on site plan, looking SW.



JF033_8: View of cabin cluster 2 (buildings 21-23) with cabin cluster 1 in the background, looking east.

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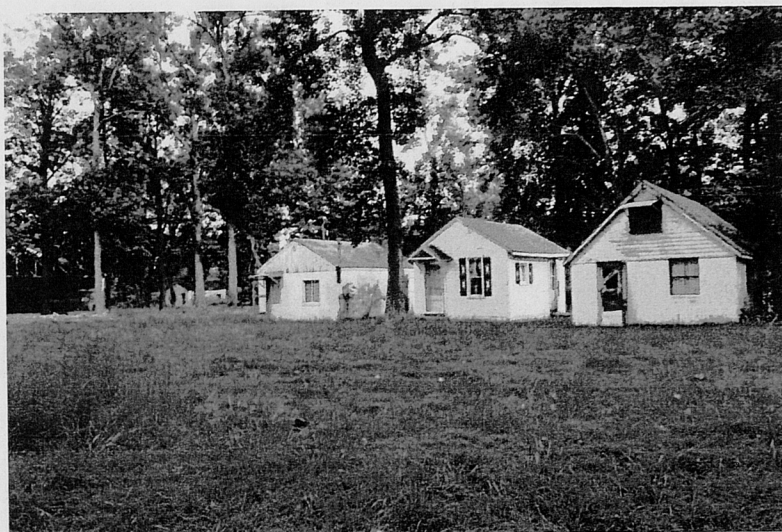
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JF033_9: Cabin cluster 2, viewing buildings 21-23 on the site plan, looking NW.



JF033_10: Cabin cluster 2, looking toward buildings 25-28 and 21-23, SE.

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JF033_11: Cabin cluster 2, looking toward buildings 24-26. Note the Tabernacle (building 1) in the background, looking west.



JF033_12: View of cabin cluster 1 (buildings 18-15), looking SE from cabin cluster 1.

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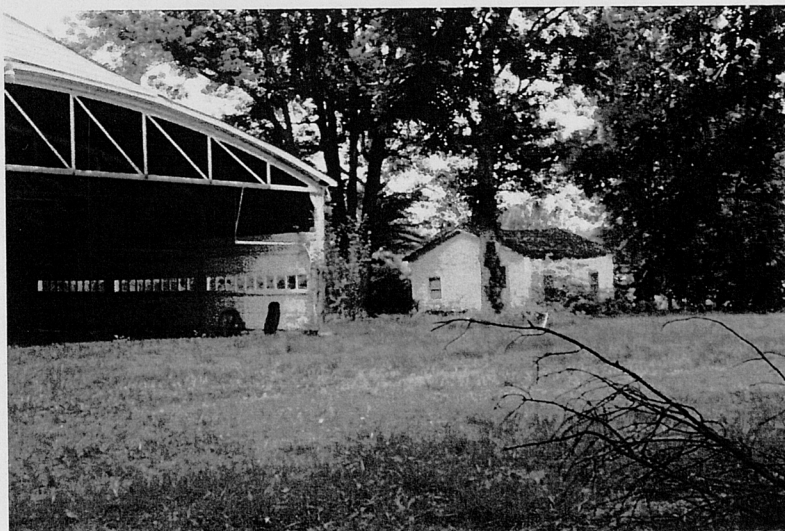
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JF033_13: View toward caretakers house (#10) toward cabin cluster 1, looking SE.



JF033_14: View of building 24 and a portion of the tabernacle (#1), looking NW.

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Site Characteristics

The Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp Meeting site is an approximately nine acre property located in southeast Jefferson County, off South Watterson Trail (formerly Meddis Lane) in the Highview/Fern Creek area. As demonstrated in the USGS topographic maps below (**Figure 4- Figure 8**), the area was largely in rural land use until suburban housing developments began appearing in the 1960s and 1970s. The property is currently surrounded by recent suburban housing developments on its east, west, and north sides. The Highview Church of God building is located to the south of the Fern Creek camp, on the corner of Glaser Lane.

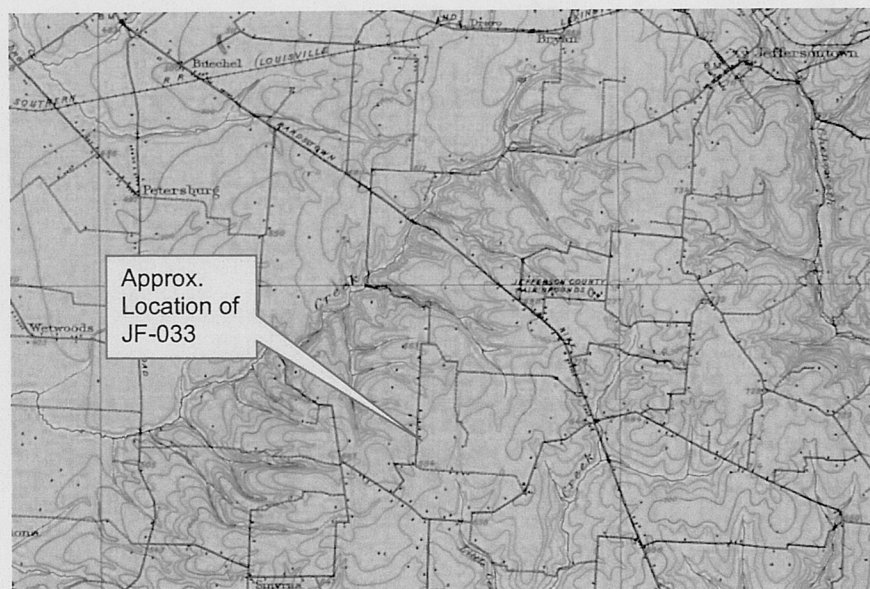


Figure 3. 1907 USGS Topographic Map, Louisville, KY Quadrangle.

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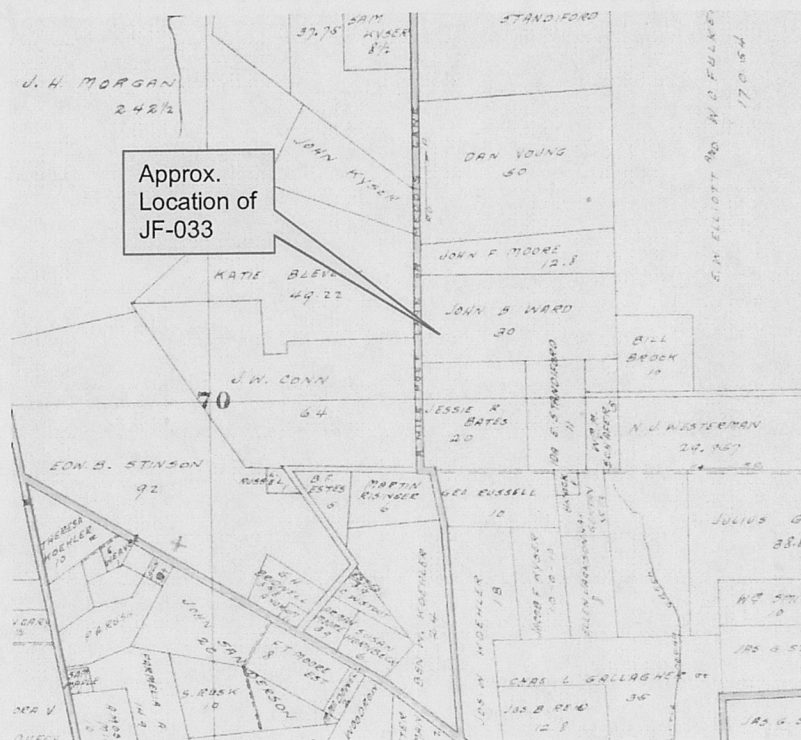


Figure 4. 1913 Louisville Title Company Map, Plate 70.

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Figure 5. 1951 USGS Topographic Map, Jeffersontown, KY

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Figure 6. 1964 USGS Topographic Map, Jeffersontown, KY Quadrangle.

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Figure 7. 1984 USGS Topographic Map, Jeffersontown, KY Quadrangle.

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Figure 8. 2013 USGS Topographic Map, Jeffersontown, KY Quadrangle.

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Site Characteristics (cont from above)

The Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp can be accessed from South Watterson Trail. An unnamed gravel road connects the site to the main road, moving east through the camp's center, and forms a return loop west near the Caretaker's Cottage (**See Figure 2**). No other automobile-oriented roads exist on the property, as the camp was meant to be traversed on foot. Several concrete sidewalks connect dormitory areas with the bath house. Given the amount of undergrowth on the site, very few pedestrian pathways are currently visible.

As noted from the context photos above, the site is largely wooded on its north and east sides with few trees or plantings near the road (west side) or on its south side. In addition to volunteer trees, the site features purposely-planted deciduous trees shading the cabin areas and lining the gravel road near the Tabernacle building. The fence line on the east and north side is also lined with deciduous trees.

Buildings on the site are arranged in right angles with the gravel road splitting the site into north and south sides. With the exception of the Tabernacle, the main meeting buildings and dormitories are situated on the property's south side. There are two cabin clusters on the property's east and north sides. Cabin Cluster 1, which is comprised of buildings 12-19, is located near the caretaker's cottage and main dormitory buildings. This cabin cluster features three rows of small frame or concrete block one-to-one-and-a-half story cottages constructed at various times from the late 1930s to the mid-1960s. Cabin Cluster 2, which is comprised of buildings 21-28, is situated near the Tabernacle and the north property line. There are two rows of small frame and concrete block one-to-one and a-half-story cottages constructed from the late 1930s to the mid-1960s. All cottages were privately owned and built, following guidance from the Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp Meeting Association. The land itself is owned by the Camp Meeting Association. With few exceptions, all buildings on site are painted white.

Individual Building Descriptions

Detailed exterior descriptions are available in the Individual Historic Resource Inventory Forms for this site (JF-033). The following table (**Table 2**) pairs the site plan numbers with the Kentucky Historic Resource Inventory numbers and provides a brief description of the building type.

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Table 2. Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp Meeting Individual Building Forms

Site Plan Number	KHC Number	Building Type	NR Status ¹	Approx Date of Construction
1	JF-2771	Tabernacle	C	Ca 1945
2	JF-2772	Missions Building	NC	1968
3	JF-2773	Boy's Dormitory	C	Ca 1950
4	JF-2774	Bath House/Restrooms	C	Ca 1964
5	JF-2775	Dining Hall/Kitchen	C	Ca 1950
6	JF-2776	Girl's Dormitory	C	Ca 1948
7	JF-2777	1939 Dormitory/Dining Hall	C	1939
8 & 9	JF-2778	Recreation Area & Snack Bar	C	Ca 1960
10	JF-2779	Caretaker's House	C	1951
11	JF-2780	Mechanic Shed/Storage	C	Ca 1940
12	JF-2781	Moran Cottage	C	Ca 1945
13	JF-2782	Fossitt Cottage	C	1939
14	JF-2783	Rothrock Cottage	C	1940
15	JF-2784	Pommerehn Cottage	C	Ca 1960
16	JF-2785	Butler Cottage	C	Ca 1945
17	JF-2786	Highland Park Church Cottage	C	Ca 1945
19	JF-2787	John Basham Cottage	C	1959
18	JF-2788	Ken Basham Cottage	C	Ca 1945
20	JF-2789	Old Restroom/Mechanic Shop	C	Ca 1940
21	JF-2790	J. Thompson Cottage	C	Ca 1960
22	JF-2791	E. Trammel Cottage	C	Ca 1945
23	JF-2792	P. Bailey Cottage	C	Ca 1960
24	JF-2793	Rev Richardson Cottage	C	Ca 1945
25	JF-2794	Barger Cottage	C	Ca 1945
26	JF-2795	Davidson Cottage	C	Ca 1950
27	JF-2796	Rev Fowler Cottage	C	Ca 1945
28	JF-2797	Robert Basham Cottage	C	Ca 1945

¹ C= Contributing to the Fern Creek Wesleyan Methodist Camp National Register District; NC = Non-Contributing to the Fern Creek Wesleyan Methodist Camp National Register District.

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Historic Significance

Development of the Holiness Camp Meeting Movement and Wesleyan Methodism in Kentucky, 1800-1965

Camp Meetings in the Early Nineteenth Century

The Methodist Camp Meeting movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries grew out of the interdenominational camp meetings of a hundred years earlier, sparked by the Great Awakening of 1801. As has been established, one of the first camp meetings recorded was held in Logan County, Kentucky on the banks of the Muddy River in 1799 by Methodist and Presbyterian ministers.² From there, "For the next fifty years camp meetings developed on all sides [various denominations] and they witnessed the conversion and edification of multitudes."³ The scale of these meetings could reach thousands of participants and had a reputation for being boisterous events. Historian Kenneth Brown notes that, "People flocked to the meetings by the tens of thousands, and some claimed the millennium had begun. In August, 1801, as many as twenty-five thousand persons, including the Governor, attended the meeting at Cane Ridge near Paris, Kentucky."⁴ Attendees could expect "fiery preaching and exhortation, huge crowds singing, shouting and praying, and especially the physical phenomena and exercises, such as falling, dancing, barking, and the almost-legendary 'jerks.'"⁵ This type of religious fervor was not generally repeated in the later camp meeting movement.

The Holiness Movement

Another factor essential to understanding the Methodist camp meeting is the "Holiness Movement," which was an important strain of spiritual thought prevalent in Methodism. Historians Black and Drury state, "The Holiness Revival was a major movement of the Spirit of God, following in the wake of the Second Great Awakening, through the teachings of Phoebe Palmer and the preaching of Charles Finney."⁶ In sum, Holiness meant that, "believers can be sanctified or made holy in this life through a second work of God's grace in their hearts."⁷ The Holiness path to Christian perfection became consecration, faith, and testimony. As it was nationally, this path was embraced by Kentuckians of all denominations but was largely focused on the Methodist Church. Historian Short states, "Throughout the [18] seventies, the eighties, and the nineties the Holiness Movement began to spread and its advocates grew in number. Independent holiness papers were established, as were also independent holiness camp meetings, and independent holiness schools."⁸ The Holiness movement became intertwined with the camp meetings movement in a way that is not thoroughly explained. Perhaps the

² Roy Hunter Short, *Methodism in Kentucky* (Louisville: The Commission on Archives and History of the Kentucky and Louisville Conferences of the United Methodist Church, 1979), 4.

³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁴ Kenneth O. Brown, *Holy Ground, Too: The Camp Meeting Family Tree* (Hazelton, PA: Holiness Archives, 1997), 42.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Robert Black and Keith Drury, *The Story of the Wesleyan Church* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2012), 56.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸ Short 1979, 31.

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camp meeting setting permitted for this second sanctification more easily. Historian Brown describes the connection as, "a huge expanding spoked wheel, with the holiness camp meeting as the hub."⁹ Whatever the case, these movements became nearly synonymous.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church in Kentucky

As far as can be determined, Wesleyan Methodism was not a popular form of the religion in Kentucky. Very little has been written about its significance in our Commonwealth. The main Methodist histories focus on what we now call the United Methodist Church, which was largely the Methodist Episcopal Church South. The origins of Wesleyan Methodism explain this absence, in part.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church was formed by dissenters from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1844.¹⁰ This more radical brand of Methodism called for the abolition of African American slavery, alcohol temperance, and a ban on participation in secret societies, such as the Masons. In addition to social concerns, a central tenet of Wesleyans was sanctification through holiness. The Wesleyan Church was especially prominent in the northern and western states that did not have African American slavery. Perhaps because Kentucky was a slave state, Wesleyan Methodism never became a large denomination. In addition, the early social concerns of the Wesleyan Church had largely dissipated by the early twentieth century, leaving a focus on sanctification through holiness. This might explain the growth of Wesleyan Methodism in Kentucky in the early twentieth century, of which Atwood Street Wesleyan Methodist Church (JF-2798) was a part.

Methodist and Holiness Camp Meetings in Kentucky from 1865-1965

After the Civil War, the camp meeting experienced its second revival in Kentucky. Historian Short notes that this expansion was marked by "erection of tabernacles capable of seating large numbers, surrounded by cottages owned by private families, and by dormitory and eating facilities. Most of the camp meetings were controlled by independent boards of trustees and were only loosely related to the church."¹¹ Camp meeting historian Kenneth O. Brown observes that, "One development that came directly out of the rise of the camp meeting resort is the formation of the camp meeting association...but these became popular after the Civil War, and literally sprang up all over the nation. Some almost functioned like a denomination, while others acted as a governing body for the campground."¹² However these camp meetings were organized, one factor appears to be constant: the camp meeting was an inter-denominational affair that welcomed participants outside their denomination.

⁹ Brown 1997, 54.

¹⁰ Black and Drury, 39.

¹¹ Short, 110.

¹² Brown, 52.

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A typical late nineteenth -to- mid-twentieth century camp meeting was held in late July or August, after the harvest, and lasted for ten days, in which participants attended three prayer services a day and listened to special guest evangelists who traveled camp meeting circuits. The camp meeting tended to occur in a permanent location, beginning in the later nineteenth century. In addition, the camp meeting featured a more standardized set of buildings, such as a frame tabernacle, camp cottages, a dining hall, and dormitories. Much has been said about the prayerful atmosphere present but there was also a social aspect important to the camp meeting's survival. Historian Thomas Meredith notes that, "Campmeeting was a social event that helped make often isolated rural life bearable."¹³ Indeed, the same could probably be said for what some termed the anonymity of urban life.

Historians Black and Drury describe the twentieth century camp meeting as follows, "The annual summer camp meetings were revivals on a larger scale. They offered the best preaching from the best evangelists in the country and the best music from the best song evangelists. Instead of one service a day, there were three or more under a big canvas tent or in a permanent wooden tabernacle. Sometimes the floor would be covered with sawdust, and seekers heading for the altar would 'hit the sawdust trail.' Except for locals, campers stayed on the grounds and ate together. People took unsaved friends and co-workers to meetings where they received a cheap vacation, but while vacationing many committed their lives to Christ..."¹⁴

There is no firm count of camp meetings in Kentucky. There were likely thousands across the Commonwealth; many of which are no longer extant. There are several older camp meetings still in existence. Among the more important mainline Methodist camp meetings in Kentucky is the Kavanaugh Camp Meeting (OL-212) in Oldham County. This camp meeting was established in the late 1870s when Bishop Kavanaugh donated the land for this "meeting in the woods." The Kavanaugh Tabernacle cost \$1,800 to build. According to historian Short, "Many leading Methodist families maintained cottages at Kavanaugh and attended annual camp meetings."¹⁵ This camp meeting remains in operation today. Other important United Methodist camp meetings include: Kuttawa in Lyon County; Hurricane in Livingston County (CN-25), and Parsons in Logan County.¹⁶ Methodist camp meetings with a specific holiness focus include Morrison near Glasgow; Wilmore Campmeeting in Jessamine County; and Ruggles in Lewis County.

According to a recent web search, Kentucky has six Holiness camp meetings currently operating.¹⁷ These camps are: Callis Grove Holiness Camp in Bedford; Carthage Holiness Camp Meeting in Carthage; Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp (JF-033); Mt Carmel Camp Meeting in Jackson; Ruggles Camp in Tollesboro (LW-4); and Wilmore Campmeeting in Jessamine County. It is unclear how often this database is updated, as the Fern Creek Camp has not operated since 2009.

¹³ Thomas Meredith, *Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Historic District* (PA). Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Approved 2012, 13.

¹⁴ Black and Drury, 159.

¹⁵ Short, 111.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ The Holiness Camp Meeting Directory, online at: <http://campmeeting.us/>. Accessed by the author in July 2014.

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There are four main camps in operation associated with the United Methodist Church: Aldersgate Camp and Retreat Center, Ruggles Camp (LW-4), Kavanaugh Life Enrichment Center (OL-212), and Loucon Training and Retreat Center.¹⁸ The Wesleyan Church features two operating camp grounds on its website: Maysville Wesleyan Camp (KY) and Cumberland Grove Wesleyan Camp (TN).¹⁹

Excepting the Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp, no Wesleyan Methodist or Holiness Camp Meetings were found to exist in Louisville and Jefferson County.

Camp Meetings as a Property Type

In order to adequately understand the cultural resources that comprise the Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp Meeting site, the author obtained information from the Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office (KHC/SHPO) regarding other camp meetings in the state. In addition, the KHC/SHPO National Register Coordinator sent out a national call for camp meeting sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Several SHPOs across the northeast, southern, and western United States responded with materials. This comparative information assisted with the development of a camp meeting property type as well as an analysis of the Fern Creek camp site.

Table 3 and Table 4 detail the sites examined.

Table 3. Kentucky Historic Resource Inventory Forms

KHC Survey Number	Site Name	Date Established	NRHP Listed?
BO-106	Aliceton Camp Meeting	1900	Yes-1998
CN-25	Hurricane Camp Meeting	1889	No
CP-43	Holiness Unto the Lord Camp Meeting	ca 1900	No
LW-4	Ruggles Camp Meeting	1872	No
OL-212	Kavanaugh Camp Meeting	1878	No

¹⁸ The United Methodist Church, Kentucky Annual Conference, online at: <http://www.kyumc.org/pages/detail/953>

¹⁹ Kentucky-Tennessee District of the Wesleyan Church, online at: http://kytnwesleyan.org/Our_Campgrounds.html

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Table 4. National Register of Historic Places Listings, Camp Meetings²⁰

State	Site name	Date Established	Date Listed
AK	Ebenezer Camp Ground	1854	1976
GA	Wesleyan Methodist Campground and Tabernacle	1902	1998
ID	Star Camp/Holiness Association Site	1941	2005
IL	Des Plaines Methodist Camp Ground	1865	2005
PA	Mt Gretna Campmeeting	1892	2012
MS	Wesleyan Grove	1835	2005/NHL*

* NHL stands for National Historic Landmark listing.

In sum, the information gained in the survey forms and National Register listings permitted the following observations of camp meetings as a property type.

- Camp meeting grounds, whether associated with the United Methodist Church or Wesleyan Methodist Church, have the following buildings on site as a minimum: a tabernacle, a kitchen/dining hall, dormitory buildings, camp cottages, and a restroom or outhouse facility.
- Construction materials for the various building types varied but appear to range from frame to concrete block; all with a rustic vernacular architectural style.
- The buildings are arranged on site in response to the property's geographic features, rather than according to a single church-approved site plan. The tabernacle can be in the direct center of the site, or it can be centrally located. Whatever the case, the tabernacle is always the spiritual heart of the camp.
- Camp meeting grounds can be located in urban or rural areas. In some cases, a camp meeting site can be an entire town unto itself.²¹
- The camp meeting site most often had an earlier, temporary location in which it was established.
- Permanent camp meetings sites were most commonly established in the late 1860s through the early 1940s.
- There were two separate heyday of camp meetings in Kentucky: the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Great Awakening and the Post-Civil war era Camp Meeting revival. The most concentrated extant building activity in Kentucky is from the late nineteenth century through the early 1970s.

²⁰ This list is not exhaustive, but a representative sampling for this context statement.

²¹ Meredith, *Mt. Gretna Campmeeting Historic District* (PA), Approved 2012.

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A good comparative site to examine briefly is the *Aliceton Camp Meeting* in Boyle County (BO-106). The Aliceton Camp Meeting was established by the Aliceton Holiness Association on a ten acre parcel of land in far western Boyle County circa 1900. According to the National Register listing, the camp grounds were given "for the purpose of establishing a Holiness camp...and propagation of what is known as Bible and Wesleyan doctrine of holiness of scripture and entire sanctification."²² The Aliceton Camp Meeting was held the last Thursday in July for ten days and featured all-day activities and prayer services.

The Aliceton camp site features a 1942 Tabernacle building, a caretaker's cottage, a bathhouse, a dining hall, a refreshment stand, a well, and several camp cottages. As will be seen below at the Fern Creek site, the camp cottages were generally privately owned, while the other buildings were owned and erected by the Camp Meeting Association. The Aliceton Tabernacle shares common design features with tabernacles across the United States and particularly at the Fern Creek site. The Aliceton Tabernacle is a large, two story frame building with paired doors on its north and south side that open to admit air and light into the building for outdoor worship services. The building's roof is supported on a metal truss system; the goal being to free the building as much as possible of internal support members that could block the audience's view. The flooring was sawdust until a more permanent concrete floor was poured in later years. A dais with a pulpit is situated on one side of the Tabernacle behind a wooden alter railing. Wooden church benches faced the stage area. Other buildings on site were constructed of frame and concrete block.

Wesleyan Methodist Camp Site History

The Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp Meeting Association was incorporated and held its first planning meeting on October 4, 1938.²³ The Association had strong ties to Louisville's Atwood Wesleyan Methodist Church (JF-2798) and its first Board of Directors reflect this connection. Although not directly governed by the Atwood Wesleyan Methodist Church, the Fern Creek camp meeting was supervised by an incorporated Association with representatives of this church on the main Board.

Originally an interdenominational Christian Church, the Atwood Street Church was brought into the Wesleyan Methodist family in January 1919. According to church historians, "Upon learning of the Wesleyan Methodist church, Rev. Figg and Rev. G.C Harrington attended the Indiana conference of that denomination at Fairmount, Indiana, in August, 1918. Being much impressed with their doctrine, standards and form of government, the group expressed a desire to become a part of the denomination and was organized into a Wesleyan Methodist Church in January, 1919."²⁴ The group espoused the doctrine of "holiness" as described in the context section above. Their church history

²² Christine Amos, "Aliceton Camp Meeting Ground," Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1998, Section 8, 9.

²³ Wesleyan Camp Meeting Association, *History of the Forming of the Association: Time and Place Officers Election: Purpose: Articles of Inc.*, Document shared with the author by Association President Robert Basham, August 2014, 1.

²⁴ The Wesleyan Church, "Local Church Histories: Kentucky District," undated document from the Wesleyan Church Archive, 7.

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states, "These devout Christians embraced the doctrine of Wesleyan holiness and were desirous of becoming affiliated with a denomination."²⁵

At the first Board meeting for the Association, the Reverend Jacob Hunter, of Louisville's Atwood Wesleyan Methodist Church, was elected President with Reverend Dempsey Fossitt serving as Vice-President.²⁶ Directors that served on the first Board were Rev Elzy L. Kerrick, E.L. Mickel, Secretary Reverend Olin M. Pfauts, K.K. Rothrock, and Treasurer Reverend Ralph Golding. The purpose of this Board was to establish an official Wesleyan Camp Meeting in Jefferson County loosely associated with the Kentucky-Indiana Conference of Wesleyan Methodist Churches, led by members of the Atwood Street Wesleyan Methodist Church. Prior to this time, camp meetings had been held at the Atwood Street Church, on a vacant lot near the corner of Preston and Atwood Streets.²⁷ Offerings were collected at the Atwood Street church and at the on-site camp meetings in order to purchase some land, preferably rural, for an official Wesleyan Methodist camp ground.

Fervor to establish a permanent camp meeting resulted in the purchase of a six-acre camp site on November 5, 1938, a mere month after the first Board meeting.²⁸ The purchase price was approximately \$1,100 or \$1,200, with a \$300 promissory note described in the land transfer deed.²⁹ The deed stated that "This property never to be used for gambling, roadhouse or liquor traffic."³⁰

Reverend Ralph Golding provided early reminiscences of the camp's formation in an undated essay titled, "Early Beginnings." In addition to serving on the Association's Board, Reverend Golding was the first camp caretaker and described the camp site as follows, "At the time of purchase, the area was swampy in nature, and strewn with leaves, barb wire, dead trees, and stumps."³¹ No buildings were present on site. Ms Christine Fowler of the Atwood Street Church, also provided a narrative of the early camp ground, "Soon after the church bought the property and began to make plans of the first camp meeting in two years. There was much work to be done. Land had to be cleared, dormitories had to be built, and a dining hall and kitchen too."³²

Reverend Golding documented the initial struggles of creating a camp ground. "As stated in the President's report of 1939, I was appointed custodian... In February 1938 [1939], I came to Louisville and under the supervision of the conference president, and in agreement with the Reverend D.W. Fossitt to build his cabin as a place of residence until other living quarters could be provided... This

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ A new Atwood Street Church was built on this vacant land in 1948.

²⁸ Jefferson County Clerk, Deed Book 1668, 612.

²⁹ Ibid., Reverend Ralph Golding, *Early Beginnings*, Reminiscences of the Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp Meeting. Undated essay on file with the Wesleyan Camp Meeting Association. Shared with the author by Association President Robert Basham of Louisville, August 2014, 1. The valuable consideration paid was not listed in the deed of record other than the promissory note for \$300.

³⁰ Jefferson County Clerk, Deed Book 1668, 612.

³¹ Reverend Ralph Golding, *Early Beginnings*, 1.

³² Christine Fowler, handwritten reminiscences, shared with the author by Association President Robert Basham of Louisville, August 2014, 2.

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cottage [JF-2782] was constructed during a period of pouring rain, and high water, in which we had difficulty to prevent our lumber from floating away."³³ Golding continued, "we arrived [March 1939] in front of the camp ground. As there was no road back to the cabin and the ground was soft and well saturated with the previous rains, our total cargo, including the piano and cow was unloaded in the field by the road... The following morning, we returned, then hired a neighbor with his mules and sled and skidded the furniture to the cottage through knee deep mud."³⁴

Golding and another church member, Jason Hayes, built the first building, a dining hall/dormitory in 1939 (JF-2777). The two-and-a-half story frame dorm, which measures 24 x 30 feet, was completed and accessible by opening of the first camp meeting on the site in August 1939.³⁵ The foundation walls for this building were concrete block obtained from the Camp Taylor area, associated with the U.S. Army encampment there.³⁶ The dining hall was reportedly a crude affair initially. Reverend Golding stated, "By leaving off a section of the wall on the south side of this first building, and building a temporary lean-to kitchen on the ground, the food was prepared and handed to people through this opening. We heard no complaints and all survived so I guess it was not too bad for a beginning."³⁷

According to Reverend Golding, the first services were held in a tent pitched northwest of the dormitory/dining hall. Reverend Van Wormer was the first camp Evangelist.³⁸ Anticipation for opening day of the camp was so palpable that Fred Bunn, a Board member, "was up before it was even daylight, clanging on something and telling everyone to get up... His clanging worked well! People were awake with nothing to do because breakfast won't be until 8 o' clock."³⁹

Excitement must have spread about the new camp, as the meetings attracted the faithful from around the region. When the Wesleyan conference held their annual meeting at the Fern Creek camp, attendance was approximately 600 persons.⁴⁰ After the Wesleyans moved their annual meeting elsewhere in the late 1960s/early 1970s, as a response to the reorganization of the church into the Wesleyan Church, the camp maintained an active attendance of approximately 200 persons.⁴¹ The camp schedule varied over the years but in general consisted of three services a day at adult camp, which was held in August from 1938-1984.⁴² Youth camp was originally conducted in June, but was consolidated with adult camp in 1984. The camp site was always meant to be inter-denominational throughout the Christian faith, but ownership of camp cottages seems to have been restricted to Wesleyan Methodists.

³³ Golding, "Early Beginnings," 2. Golding states February 1938, but as the land was not purchased until November 1938, this seems unlikely. The author assumes this is a typographic error.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Fowler, handwritten reminiscences, 3.

⁴⁰ Kristin Miller, "Wesleyans coming back to Fern Creek Camp July 12-21," Newspaper unknown, July 1, 1991. Shared with the author by Association President Robert Basham of Louisville, August 2014.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Robert Basham, telephone conversation with the author, September 2014.

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In response to this phenomenal early growth in attendance, construction of camp buildings was a priority. Board of Director Annual Meeting Minutes indicate that in August 1943, plans were drawn up for building lots and "restriction on type and color; the materials of construction: no double units. Owner of building lots to be a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church." ⁴³ In the early years, the Rothrock family built their cottage (JF-2783) next to Reverend Fossitt's cabin (JF-2782) and Brother Dunkum's cottage was constructed the next summer. Perhaps the most significant building constructed in the 1940s was the Tabernacle (JF-2771). As noted in the camp meeting property type discussion above, the Tabernacle is the spiritual center of the camp meeting, where outdoor services were held. According to current President Robert Basham, the Fern Creek Tabernacle was constructed in 1945 and featured sawdust flooring until a concrete floor was poured in the early 1950s. The Tabernacle had wooden benches for seating and could hold approximately 300 worshippers within its main walls. Other buildings constructed in the 1940s include the girl's dormitory (JF-2776), a mechanic's shed for the caretaker (JF-2780), and a restroom facility (JF-2789).

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of sustained growth for the Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp. In addition to camp cottages, such as the Basham family cabins (JF-2787 and JF-2788), several important buildings were constructed to serve the growing camp. The boy's dormitory (JF-2773) and the new kitchen/dining hall (JF-2775) were completed in the early 1950s. The caretaker's cabin (JF-2779) was rebuilt on the same footprint, after a fire in 1951. A new lunch stand (JF-2778) was built in 1960 to replace the earlier frame building, constructed in one-day by Reverend Golding and his brethren George Hutcherson of the Jamestown Mission.⁴⁴ A new restroom facility (JF-2774) was built on-site in 1964. The last building constructed on the site was the Missions Building (JF-2772), also known as the Administration Building, in 1968.

From perusal of the Fern Creek Association's meeting minutes, the camp meetings appear to have been successful up into the 1990s, in spite of difficulties in obtaining a diligent caretaker. A camp meeting brochure found on site from August 1985 notes that the camp was conducted for a full ten day session with a daily schedule of prayer, youth activities, and an evangelistic service from 9 am until 10 pm daily. Sunday schedule began at 9 am with prayer time and concluded with a children's service at 7:30 pm. The camp president was Reverend John W. Basham. Evangelists were Dr. Winifred Fisher and Reverend Catherine and Martha Bloom. In addition, finances were kept steady by rental of the camp site to various church groups, such as the Kentucky Church of the Nazarene in 1974.⁴⁵

Although financial concerns were present in the late 1970s, financial difficulties were an ever-present discussion in the late 1990s. Minutes mention the "high cost of utilities," "pledges coming in very slowly," and "low attendance" as issues that contributed to insufficient finances. By 2005, the Association had to borrow \$1,000 to pay bills; the cost of operating the camp was \$20,000 that year.

⁴³ Wesleyan Camp Meeting Association, 1.

⁴⁴ Golding, 4.

⁴⁵ Wesleyan Camp Meeting Association, August 15, 1974.

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The 2008 minutes state that, "The future of the camp was the biggest concern the Board had to face. Where were the funds coming from. The faithful few who have been giving for so many years, are not able to carry the entire load of the camp."⁴⁶

Camp meetings were held at the Fern Creek camp ground until 2009. Due to declining participation and anemic financial resources, the camp was closed and the land is currently for sale. In spite of this ending, the Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp was a very special place for all those who attended over its seventy year span. Long-time participant, evangelist Reverend Martha Bloom celebrated the 70-Yesterdays in a poetic tribute shared with the author by Camp President Robert Basham. "70-Yesterdays are being celebrated at Fern Creek. To say we are awed at God's marvelous grace is putting it mildly. I was 17. My brother Richard Bloom and his wife Catherine and I had been called into the ministry. Fern Creek was one of our first adventures of faith..."⁴⁷ Another (unnamed) participant noted, "This will be my 65th camp. Over the years I have attended every Camp Meeting, youth conference and camp, children's camp, missions' conference and whatever else was held here and very often every night. God has been faithful. You have been faithful. The seed has been sown, the harvest will be forever."⁴⁸

Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp Meeting Evaluation

The Fern Creek Wesleyan Methodist Camp meets National Register Criteria A as an important example of a Wesleyan Methodist Holiness Camp Meeting in Jefferson County, Kentucky. The site is an historic district with 27 contributing resources and 1 non-contributing resource. The non-contributing resource is the Missions Building, which is not yet 50 years old. It is non-contributing only due to age. The district's period of significance is from 1939-1968 and the Area of Significance is Religion. The context through which this significance can be viewed is "The Development of the Holiness Movement and Wesleyan Methodist Camp Meetings in Jefferson County, Kentucky."

The Camp Meeting retains the physical characteristics important to the Camp Meeting property type, developed above and reiterated below. These include:

- The Fern Creek Camp Meeting grounds has the following buildings on site: a tabernacle, a kitchen/dining hall, dormitory buildings, camp cottages, and a restroom and former outhouse facility.
- Construction materials for the various building types are frame to concrete block; all with a rustic vernacular architectural style.

⁴⁶ Ibid., July 18, 2008.

⁴⁷ Martha Bloom Raper, 70-Yesterdays, July 2009. Shared with the author by Association President Robert Basham, August 2014.

⁴⁸ Unnamed participant, "Camp Meeting," July 2008. Shared with the author by Association President Robert Basham, August 2014.

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- The buildings are arranged on site in response to the property's geographic features, rather than according to a single church-approved site plan. The tabernacle is centrally located and is the spiritual heart of the camp.
- The Fern Creek Camp Meeting grounds was situated in a rural area, as appears to be common in Kentucky.
- The Wesleyan camp meeting met for a few years near the Atwood Street church on a vacant lot before the official site was established.
- The Fern Creek site was developed beginning the 1939 and continuing into the late 1960s. Permanent camp meetings sites were most commonly built beginning in the late 1860s through the early 1940s.
- The Fern Creek Wesleyan Camp is associated with the second period of camp meeting development in Kentucky. There were two separate heyday of camp meetings in Kentucky: the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Great Awakening and the Post-Civil war era Camp Meeting revival. The most concentrated extant building activity in Kentucky is from the late nineteenth century through the early 1970s.

The Fern Creek Wesleyan Methodist Camp Meeting retains an excellent integrity of location, materials, workmanship, design, feeling and association to its period of significance from 1939-1968. The property maintains a moderate integrity of setting.

The Fern Creek camp retains its *integrity of location*. It has been in the same location since its establishment in 1939. The camp meeting has a moderate level of *integrity of setting*. The property itself maintains an excellent integrity of setting with mature trees and a distinct rural camp ground feel. The surrounding properties, however, are no longer rural in nature but were developed into residential subdivisions in the 1960s-1990s. For this reason, the camp has a medium level of integrity of setting.

The camp meeting ground has an excellent *integrity of design*. The historic looped roadway is intact as are the pedestrian paths that campers used to traverse the grounds. In addition, the individual buildings have had few alterations to their historic floor plans or exterior designs. No buildings have an exterior addition outside the period of significance, nor has any building been moved.

Most of the camp ground buildings retain their *integrity of workmanship and materials*. The frame and concrete block cottages maintain their rustic appearance and materials. The camp tabernacle has been clad in vinyl siding, but this has not significantly altered its appearance. In all, most buildings have had few character-altering changes.

Finally, the *feeling and association* linked to the Fern Creek Wesleyan Methodist Camp helps to convey its significance. Due to the medium-to-high levels of *integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship*, the camp is historically associated with the period of greatest physical development from 1939-1968 as an important example of a Wesleyan Methodist Camp Meeting ground in Louisville and Jefferson County. The integrity expressed by the property helps to underscore this significance.

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